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THE GULL



Golden Gate Audubon Society

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RESOURCE DEPLETION



More and more people are being led to find that, after diligently sorting and setting their recyclables out by the curb, they still end up in the landfill. This scenario is rapidly becoming common practice in many parts of the nation. The blame, however, does not lie with your local recycling coordinator or city council. The roots of this problem go much deeper, and, in fact, are the same roots to many if not most of the environmental problems we face.

The reason that your city is very possibly landfilling your recyclables is because, except for a few commodities such as aluminum and white paper, recyclables are so worthless that nobody wants them. Most cities did not expect this when they started curbside recycling programs; they thought the city would be able to recoup at least some of the substantial program costs with revenue from the sale of recyclables. But since then, prices for recyclables have crashed, leaving many recycling programs fighting for survival, and many recycling businesses bankrupt.

At first glance it seems impossible that recyclables are not being bought. Making paper from recycled feedstock requires less energy, water, and other raw materials than starting with a tree. Then why are paper companies still using trees to make their paper as opposed to recycled newsprint? A big part of the answer lies in the twisted world of corporate tax law. "Resource Depletion Allowances" give tax breaks to companies that deplete resources by using virgin materials and lots of energy. In essence, they make it cheaper to use virgin materials than recycled. These allowances exist on both the state and federal levels, and are jealously guarded by their recipients. Presently, no such incentives exist on a nationwide scale for producers who use recycled materials as feedstock.

If granting companies tax exemptions for depleting virgin resources isn't appalling enough, then how about the government simply giving away virgin resources? Government agencies such as the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Department of

(continued, p. 110)

the Interior essentially give away the nation's forests, grasslands, and mineral resources. This federal giveaway reached its peak during the early 1980s, when the Reagan/Bush administration, over a two-year period, attempted to lease exploration rights to 11 billion tons of coal on federal rangelands, timberlands, and wilderness areas; open 1 billion acres of the outer continental shelf to oil and gas exploration (virtually the entire federal jurisdiction); sell 35 million acres of public land (about the size of Iowa), primarily for cattle raising; and permit the Forest Service to open Wilderness areas to oil and mineral exploration.

How can recycled materials compete when virgin materials have been given so many unfair advantages over them? Obviously, they can't, and that is a large reason why your recyclables are going to that landfill instead of being reprocessed.

What can we do about this? Repealing resource depletion allowances is like taking a billion dollar piece of candy from the likes of Chevron, Exxon, Georgia Pacific, and such. They won't give them up easily, and they've got hundreds of lobbyists and millions of dollars on Capitol Hill and in Sacramento to ensure that this doesn't happen. At this point, it would probably be easier to try to persuade the state and federal government to even the playing field for recyclables by extending them

the same tax benefits as virgin materials. Also remember that this is an election year, so you might want to remember which politicians tried to give away millions of acres of federal lands to their oil buddies, which candidates claimed to be the "environmental candidates" while raping the environment, and which candidates simply sat back and didn't do a thing about it.

—JAY PLATER

BAY AREA ACTION May/June 1992

FREE KITTY FIXING

As a part of an on-going effort to end pet overpopulation in San Francisco, the SF/SPCA has "fixed" its sights upon the City's cat population during July (in June, too, but *The GULL* learned this just now). The Society will alter all SF cats—owned and unowned—free of charge at the SF/SPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic.

To take advantage of the free alteration, pet owners or caretakers must live in San Francisco, and when they make an appointment they must tell the clerk how they heard about this special program. For information or to make an appointment for this free feline fix, call The San Francisco SPCA now at 554-3000.

Send address changes to office promptly; Post office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership — local and national \$30 per year (individual); \$38 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$10 per year; single issues \$1. High school and college student membership \$18 per year. Senior citizen individual \$21, senior citizen family \$23. Associate Membership in Golden Gate Audubon Society, \$10 per year.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 15, 1917,
and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.

The Gull deadline is the first of the month for the following month, and July 15th for September issue.

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PROGRAM COORDINATOR HIRED

We are pleased to announce that Arthur Feinstein has been hired as our new Program Coordinator/Office Manager. Arthur is a past president of the Chapter and has held the post of Conservation Chairman for the past several years. As our staff person, Arthur will be responsible for our office and for a variety of membership services and conservation programs. Arthur's depth of experience in the Audubon cause and his knowledge of local, state and national environmental issues will be invaluable to us.

The resignation of Barbara Rivenes prompted a search for a new staff person. Barbara has served GGAS with extraordinary dedication and cheerfulness for nearly eight years. We are delighted that Barbara has accepted the invitation of the Board of Directors to assume the post of Chairman of the Membership Committee and become a Director of GGAS.

—STEVEN MARGOLIN

ARE YOU FREE?

The roster of the chapter's most active participants appears every month on the back cover of *The GULL*. It is so familiar a feature that it probably is not looked at by many. Take a look. For months and months vacancies have existed for publicity, development and hospitality, and now with Arthur Feinstein's having taken a paid position with GGAS there is a BIG hole in the Conservation Committee, probably so big we will need two people to replace him. Maybe it is time for you to give a hand in the operation of the chapter. Please call the office for more information, 510-843-2222.

There are short-term needs, too, help with seed sales, help in the office, help at fairs and festivals, and once a year we have a month when we are expected to provide hosts for Audubon Canyon Ranch on weekends. Are you available?



FARALLON TRIP

The Golden Gate Audubon Society will sponsor a boat trip on **Sunday, August 9** to circle the Farallon Islands. Past trips have produced sightings of tufted puffins, shearwaters, albatross, Hump-back whale and several other species of marine mammals. Reservations may be made by sending \$30 per person to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. Make checks payable to Golden Gate Audubon Society and enclose a self addressed stamped envelope. We plan a very early morning departure from Emeryville Marina. Details on when and where to meet will be mailed with confirmation notices. For more information call GGAS office at 510-843-2222.

FIELD TRIPS CALENDAR

Thursday-Sunday, July 30-Aug. 2—Backpacking trip in Lassen Volcanic National Park. We will backpack in three miles to Snag Lake and spend three nights in primitive camping by a stream near a large meadow. We should see a mixed flock of warblers and other songbirds that summer in Lassen, resi-

dent birds of the mountains, bald eagles, and perhaps some migrating shorebirds. We will be in beautiful country! Everyone will be responsible for his/her own gear and food, although some cooperative meals may be arranged. This trip is limited to 12 people. For details call David Rice (510) 527-7210. Leaders: David Rice and Robin Pulich. \$ (✓).

Saturday–Sunday, August 1–2—Yosemite Alpine Ecology. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday at Cathedral Lakes trailhead, toward the western side of Tuolumne Meadows near Tuolumne Meadows Visitors' Center on Tioga Pass Road through Yosemite (Hwy. 120). We will do a car shuttle to the "secret trail" that we will use to climb to Cathedral Lake, Upper Cathedral Lake, over Cathedral Pass, by Budd Lake, and back to Tuolumne Meadows—about 5 to 6 miles in total, with an elevation gain of 1,500 feet or more. There is gorgeous scenery along the way with plenty of wildflowers and some interesting birds in normal years.

On Sunday we will meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot on the north side of Tioga Pass Road, just west of the Tioga Pass Entrance Station. We will hike in that general area, and plan to return to the cars by 2:30 to 3 p.m. at the latest.

Bring a lunch for each day, ample liquids, hat, sun lotion, mosquito repellent, water repellent jacket, and good walking shoes or boots with treaded soles—no tennis or running shoes, please. Because of the length of the trip and the high altitudes involved (over 9,000 ft.), participants should be in good physical condition, have no heart problems, and have had some experience in high altitude hiking.

Forest Service and County Campgrounds are located east of the park entrance off Hwy. 120 between Tioga Pass and Lee Vining, as well as Tuolumne Meadows Campground and other campgrounds on Hwy. 120 inside Yosemite National Park. Motels in Lee Vining include: Best Western Lakeview Motel, (619) 647-6543; Gateway Motel, (619) 647-6467; and Murphy's (619) 647-6316. Leader: George Peyton (510) 444-3131—weekdays. \$ (✓)

Sunday, August 9, Farallon Trip. (See details on p. 111.)

PLAN AHEAD:

Sunday, Sept. 27, GGAS Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip. (See details on p. 116).

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sites that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (✓). See below.

Problems: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chmn. (510) 524-2399.

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

AUDUBON ADVENTURES

Audubon Adventures, the newspaper—format science and environment education program from the National Audubon Society, was sent to 26 grade school classrooms in the GGAS boundary area: San Francisco, Oakland, Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, El Cerrito, Richmond and Orinda. We found over 200 eligible schools in the area, and sent letters asking schools or teachers if there was interest in receiving the program.

The response was daunting. At the end of May 83 responders asked to be included, and we'll likely hear from more. The cost to GGAS is \$30 per classroom. The children each get individual copies of *Audubon Adventures*. The teachers get a study guide and suggestions for involving their students. We get enthusiastic reports of interest and of activities going on as a result, and new interest in the natural world in a most important population.

Most of the 26 teachers have indicated they want to continue, and with 83 new requests, we'll need \$3000 or more. This is where the membership comes in. You can contribute toward the program, you can suggest teachers who might be interested, you could even sponsor the classroom where you know a child. Or you might have an idea about corporate sponsors. Please call 510-843-2222 and give us your thoughts, or mail a check to the GGAS office.

OBSERVATIONS: MAY 1992

Migrant chasing is fun—spring and fall when birds are on the move and new things are arriving daily, it's a kick (and a challenge) to comb the bushes and scope the mud-flats looking and listening for the species that weren't there the day before. Always hoping of course that the joy of seeing new old regulars will be joined, perhaps even supplanted, by the thrill of finding something totally unexpected and highly unusual. It's the lure of the vagrant—the bird that doesn't belong, the one that's totally lost and out of place. And in fact, it's vagrants and oddities that are the stuff of this column, which is not to say that they are the only birds worthy of note. Rather, they're charismatic, as can be demonstrated by the crowds which

gather on the day following the report of something "good" (i.e., geographically misplaced) on the Rare Bird Alert.

Which brings up an interesting point having to do as much with attitude as with performance. It would seem that Rare Bird Alerts, like the Lane Guides, have created and nurtured numbers of birders who are totally reactive—they emerge chiefly in response to the findings of others, travelling to the carefully pinpointed places and zapping target birds, ideally within five minutes or less of arrival; seldom do they venture abroad to make their own discoveries. The case in point is Saturday, May 30, smack in the middle of prime spring vagrant season. The Friday night Rare Bird Update mentioned a singing male Northern Parula at Samuel P. Taylor State Park, but that was it for Marin County. Saturday dawned with a heavy marine layer (low clouds) and moderate winds along the coast—tip-top vagrant conditions for outer Pt. Reyes. As the day progressed it became evident that there were only three, perhaps four, birders combing the trees on the outer Point. Their findings included Yellow-throated, Magnolia and Tennessee Warblers as well as a Northern Parula. Sunday, birder numbers climbed to about fifteen, and the findings included all of Saturday's birds plus Worm-eating and Chestnut-sided Warblers, three Northern Parulas, two American Redstarts, Ovenbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Philadelphia Vireo. There were more birders out on Monday and the discoveries continued.

The points here are several: finding one's own birds, rare or otherwise, is a good deal more soul-satisfying than ticking off others' discoveries; more eyes ferret out more birds—the more people there are looking, the more birds

there are likely to be found; if we all waited for "good" birds to be announced on the Rare Bird Alert, the findings would be few and mostly on S.E. Farallon where there is a hired audience. Vagrant traps, with good reason, are well-known; they share some important geographical similarities and have a history of producing rare migrants. This does not mean that all vagrant traps are known, nor does it mean that rare migrants show up only at vagrant traps—it's a matter of concentration, both of birds and birders. Isolated groups of trees should always be checked, and ears and eyes should always be cocked for the unusual. And, as far as land-bird migration is concerned, any weekend in May or June holds possibilities, but when the marine layer is present and the winds are low, the coast must be assumed to be filled with good birds waiting to be discovered, regardless of what the Rare Bird Alert is reporting.

There were a lot of birds around in May. And the ocean can hardly be considered a vagrant trap, but long-distance pelagic trips as expected turned up a couple of but unexpected rarities: **Dark-rumped Petrel**, a large, strong-flying *Pterodroma* found in the Galapagos and Hawaii, a first for North America outside of Hawaii; and **Band-rumped Storm-Petrel**, another warm-water bird for which we can thank *El Nino*. Other sightings included three Laysan Albatross, up to thirty-four Murphy's Petrels, one Cook's Petrel, a Flesh-footed Shearwater, up to 120 Leach's Storm-Petrels and a Xantus' Murrelet (BHi, SBT, SFB). A **Cook's Petrel** was seen from the Cliff House in S.F. on the 10th (ASH) and two Xantus' Murrelets were close to shore in Monterey on the 23rd (fide RC). The S.F. *Chronicle* carried a story early in

the month about a pod of Killer Whales (*Orcas*) in Monterey Bay that had been observed attacking and killing a Gray Whale calf; coincident with that was a report of Black-footed Albatrosses, Ashy Storm-petrels, Pomarine Jaegers and Sabine's Gulls feeding on the blubber and oil of the dead calf (fide RC). An unhealthy **Brown Booby** was reported from S.E. Farallon from the 26th thru the end of the month (PP).

The Steller's Eider at Bodega Bay was last seen on May 2 (NTC). A Broad-winged Hawk was observed over Mt. San Bruno on the 9th (HBr fide MMC). One, possibly two, Semipalmated Sandpipers were reported from the San Mateo coast at the end of the month (RSTh, MiF). And there were smatterings of Red Phalaropes, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers, Franklin's and Sabine's Gulls (including several seen from shore), and Arctic and Common Terns. Reports of single Least Terns from Abbott's Lagoon and Bodega Bay (ASH, DN) were viewed with great interest by researchers studying the colony in Alameda—these would be quite a distance north of known birds and might be the harbinger of a range extension. Up to sixteen Black Terns were reported from Hayward Shoreline (RJR, ES, JE, JBBH) and Black Skimmers were seen along the coast from the Salinas River to Princeton Harbor (fide RC, DP, RSTh). A **Thick-billed Murre** off Bodega Head on the 18th is worthy of note (MLR).

Early May brought a wave of migratory hummingbirds through Tilden Park: Calliope, Rufous and Black-chinned were all seen (EMacL, EH, KF, mob). A male Costa's Hummingbird arrived at a feeder near Pt. Reyes Station, a good northwest and

coastward stretch of its normal range, on May 2, nearly two months later than one appeared last year; it was still tanking up every twenty minutes at this reporting (RS). Up to six Cassin's Kingbirds, feeding young, were reported from the same golf course near Modesto where a pair was found last year (CaL, JBH, GFB). They apparently can be seen quite regularly in some of the canyons along the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley south of here, so perhaps they are inexorably extending their range to the north. A Yellow-billed Magpie was in Wildcat Canyon on the 3rd (ToC).

The following list is quite extraordinary; note the **three** Yellow-throated Vireos, along with all those Hooded Warblers and Northern Parulas. Rich Stallcup decided, with a grin, that he had just had a "Big Parula Day" after finding nine in West Marin on the 31st.

WARBLERS AND VIREOS

WHITE-EYED VIREO			
1	5/7	San Mateo	RSTh
YELLOW-THROATED VIREO			
1	4/28	Terra Linda	MaS fide
1,1	5/9,16	Pt. Reyes	RS,JSC,LLu, AD, MCM
PHILADELPHIA VIREO			
1	5/7	El Granada	fide RSTh
1	5/31	Pt. Reyes	RS
RED-EYED VIREO			
3 total	4/29-6/1	S.E. Farallon	PP
1	5/15	Golden Gate Park	ASH
2,1	5/24,6/1	Pt. Reyes	JM,DES,NS, TE,RS,KH
BLUE-WINGED WARBLER			
1	5/24	S.E. Farallon	PP fide KH
TENNESSEE WARBLER			
5 total	4/29-5/24	S.E. Farallon	PP
1,1,1	5/13-31	Pt. Reyes	RS,SGL,BL SBT,mob
2	5/23	San Francisco	ASH
NORTHERN PARULA			
1,1,4	5/1-24	Monterey County	CKf,RC,DR
1,1,1	5/2-24	San Francisco	JSC,DSg, ASH,BHi RMrr,ELb
1	5/7-23	Big Basin	mob
16 total	5/8-6/1	Pt. Reyes	RSTh,DPo, MiF,AME
7 total	5/10-27	San Mateo Coast	PJM
1	5/17	Coyote Creek	

1	5/17	San Rafael	BiN
1	5/17	Bodega Bay	DN,LLu
1	5/26	Mono Lake	DN
1	5/27	Samuel P. Taylor	DDeS
1,1	5/31,6/1	Berkeley	EMacL
2	5/30-6/1	S.E. Farallon	PP
CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER			
4 total	5/24-6/1	S.E. Farallon	PP
1	5/24	Big Sur River	SFB
1	5/31-6/1	Pt. Reyes	MB,JM,RS
MAGNOLIA WARBLER			
3 total	5/18-24	S.E. Farallon	PP
1	5/27	Walnut Creek	BW
1	5/30-31	Pt. Reyes	SBT,RS,JM MFe
BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER			
1,1	5/19,24	S.E. Farallon	PP
YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER			
1	5/24	Big Sur	SFB
1	5/30-31	Pt. Reyes	SBT,RS,JM, mob
PINE WARBLER			
1	5/5	El Granada	BS fide RSTh
PALM WARBLER			
1	5/7	Pt. Reyes	RS
PRAIRIE WARBLER			
1	4/12-5/10	El Granada	RSTh
BLACKPOLL WARBLER			
1,1	5/14,6/1	S.E. Farallon	PP
BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER			
1,1	5/6,8	San Francisco	BD,ASH,CaL
1,1	5/13,6/1	Pt. Reyes	SGL,RS,KH
1	5/14	S.E. Farallon	PP
AMERICAN REDSTART			
7 total	5/7-6/1	S.E. Farallon	PP
5 total	5/14-6/1	Pt. Reyes	mob
1,1	5/28,31	San Mateo Coast	GJS,RSTh
WORM-EATING WARBLER			
1	5/7	S.E. Farallon	PP
1	5/31-6/1	Pt. Reyes	JM,mob
OVENBIRD			
1,1	5/10,31	Pt. Reyes	SBT,JM
3 total	5/13-24	S.E. Farallon	PP
1	5/23	Pacific Grove	fide RC
1	5/26	San Gregorio	BS fide RSTh
KENTUCKY WARBLER			
5 total	5/2-6/1	S.E. Farallon	PP
1	5/15-16	Petaluma	DN
1	5/24-6/1	Tahoe Donner	LEd,JoK, DGY
HOODED WARBLER			
1	4/25	Pt. Reyes	RS,SGL, NS,TE
4 total	5/13,23		PP
1	4/29-5/7	S.E. Farallon	RSTh, DP
1	5/10	Gazos Creek Rd.	KH
1	5/11	Stinson Beach	ASH, MLR
1,1	5/13,31	San Francisco	PJM
1	5/15	Woodside	
1	5/29	Sanborn-Skyline Park	DLe
1	6/1	Tilden Park	WiG

CANADA WARBLER

2 total 5/24-6/1 S.E. Farallon PP

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

2	5/10	Annadel State Park	LLu
2	5/10	Del Puerto Canyon	AD, JEW
1	5/17	Bodega Bay	DN

There were Summer Tanagers in Stinson Beach and Pt. Reyes on the 11th and 16th (KH, RS) and Pleasanton on the 24th (SRO). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Indigo Buntings passed through in moderate numbers. Green-tailed Towhee, Brewer's and Vesper Sparrow were all seen on S. E. Farallon (PP), and the last Chestnut-collared Longspur was at the Spaletta Plateau on April 25 (RS). Boblink at Abbott's Lagoon (ASH) and S. E. Farallon (PP), Great-tailed Grackle at Whiskeytown Lake (BY) and Orchard Oriole in Monterey County (PEG) round out the month.

Observers: Stephen F. Bailey, Florence G. Bennett, George F. Bing, Herb Brandt, Mike Bumgartner, Rita Carratello, Tom Condit, Nancy T. Conzett, J. Scott Cox, Dave DeSante, Barbara Deutsch, Ann Dewart, Todd Easterla, Joe Eaton, Leo Edson, Alan M. Eisner, Jules Evans, Mike Feighner, Mark Fenner, Kathy Francone, William Gilbert, Steve Glover, Philip E. Gordon, Keith Hansen, J. B. Haven, Bob Hirt, Eli Holst, Mark Homrighausen, Alan S. Hopkins, John Kemper, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, David Lee, Les Lieurance, Bill Lofthouse, Calvin Lou, Eamonn MacLochlainn, Mac McCormick, Robert Merrill, Peter J. Metropulos, Mark C. Miller, Joe Morlan, Dan Nelson, Bill Noble, David Powell, Peter Pyle, Robert J. Richmond, Don Roberson, Mary Louise Rosegay, Steve Rovell, Barry Sauppe, Marilyn Schmitz, Donald E. Schmoldt, Dan Singer, Neal Smith, Rich Stallcup, Gary J. Strachan, Emilie Strauss, Scott B. Terrill, Ron S. Thorn, Janet E. Wessel, Bob Wisecarver, David G. Yee, Bob Yutzy. Data thanks to Joe Morlan the Northern California Rare Bird Alert.

—ANN DEWART



MONTEREY BAY PELAGIC TRIP

The Golden Gate Audubon Society will sponsor a boat trip on **Sunday, September 27** to view seabirds and marine mammals. We plan a 7:30 a.m. departure from Monterey Harbor. Past trips have produced sightings of albatross, shearwaters, jaegers, alcids, dolphin, whales and other species not usually seen from land.

Reservations may be made by sending \$29 per person to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, California 94702. Make checks payable to Golden Gate Audubon Society and enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. Details on when and where to meet will be mailed with confirmation notices. For more information call GGAS office at 510-843-2222.

A LAST WORD ON B-Bs

A letter from Richard Avanzino, president of the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals objected to *The GULL's* editor's failure to take a stronger stand on the B-B gun issue. **All right, I do oppose using any sort of gun.**

I know the Society supports spaying, neutering and keeping cats inside. I hope it joins GGAS in calling for cat licensing also, as a way to reduce the proliferation of feral felines and enhancing pet owner responsibility.

—EDITOR

BACK YARD BIRDER

Relying on the silver wings of a 737, this back yard birder flew to Tucson, Arizona. It was a convention for my husband and a chance for me to visit a famous birding hot spot just 40 miles south, Madera Canyon. There were thunderstorms every afternoon so we set out after breakfast. It was quite warm as we drove through the desert, the saguaro cacti wearing white crowns of creamy white flowers. At about 5,000 feet in the Santa Rita Mountains it was a perfect temperature for hiking alongside the gurgling stream, its banks decorated with bright yellow columbine. No wonder the canyon rang with bird song, dominated by the ebullient Black-headed Grosbeaks' arias. It was wonderful riparian habitat. The banks were lined with great old sycamores whose plentiful holes provided ample nesting sites for a variety of birds including the Elegant Trogon, my "quest." We were not so lucky that day. Only one birder had seen a female and it seemed avid birders had disturbed these shy birds and they had fled further up the stream, beyond trail's end. Sadly, sometimes birders are too avid. I had heard that eager watchers had kept Eared Trogons from nesting in Ramsey Canyon, also in Arizona. I guess some people have no compunctions when it comes to adding to their lists.



As I stopped to catch my breath I picked out an unfamiliar sound from among the familiar ones: Acorn Woodpeckers, Bewick's Wrens, robins, grosbeaks, all with a slightly different "Arizona accent." By cupping my ears I zeroed in on the source of a rich, liquid series of warbles. In a poplar treetop below the trail a small jet-black bird with white wing patches flitted about. The beautiful red breast announced, "I am a beautiful male Painted Redstart!" It was a first for me, and perfect.

No matter how often you see one, the sheer joy of his song makes the House Wren special. A very dramatic male was in full concert on a bare limb as we walked by. He was still belting it out an hour later on our way back. I hope a female was properly impressed with this impresario!

Meanwhile, a fellow birder showed us a flycatcher building a nest on a sycamore limb nearby. She was one of the dreaded Empidonax genus, the bane of birders' existences. Which of these famously nondescript tyrant flycatchers was she? With time and patience and many good views, a group of us agreed on the Dusky, another new bird for me. The tip-off was the lower bill, orangish at its base and its tell-tale habit of flicking her tail upwards when perched. She aggressively attacked an Acorn Woodpecker who invaded her space. Later I added two more lifers, a Brown-headed and a Dusky-capped Flycatcher.

Suddenly we were in vireo country—a Hutton's was monotonously calling and then a more interesting song burst from above. Finally we spotted the songster just long enough to see an eye ring, a longish tail and faint wing bars on a gray body: a Gray Vireo. Later we heard a similar song, not as varied or fast as the Gray's. In the tippy-top of a poplar (Oh! My aching neck!) sat a Solitary Vireo, exhibiting her bold

white spectacles and her prominent wing bars amid a darker gray head and back with light yellow flanks.

No visit to Arizona would be complete without hummingbirds. The Broad-tailed entertained me with aerial displays employing the loud whistling sounds of his wing beats. The Broad-billed was lovely but the Blue-throated took my breath away. This large 5" hummer literally roars as he zooms from flower to flower.

Birding a new area is like a treasure hunt or eating peanuts. It's very hard to stop and I was getting greedy. Since I travel with an earthling, I came to my senses before I embarrassed myself. When I noticed my patient husband whittling a twig I knew I'd pushed his outer limits. Time to leave lovely Madera Canyon. After all, I have to protect future birding prospects!

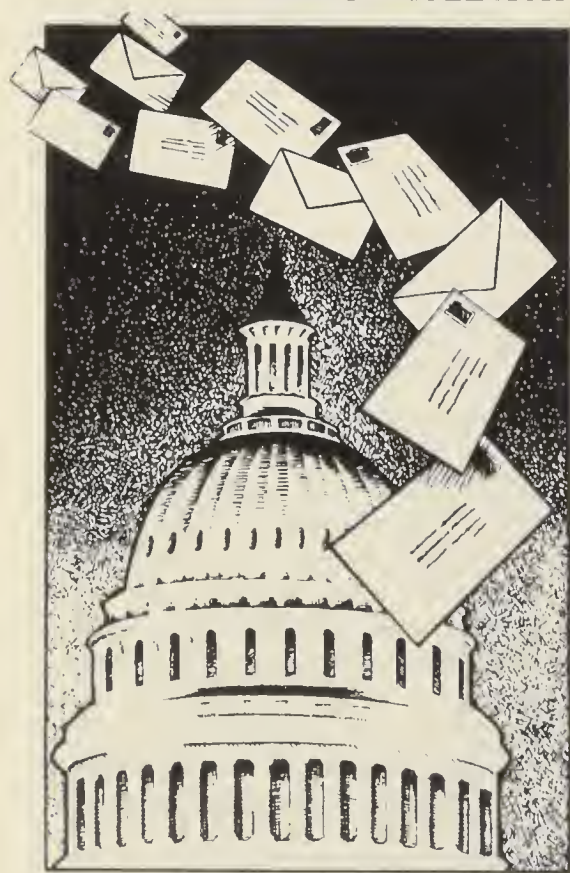
—MEG PAULETICH

WHY WE ARE WANDERING TATTLERS

Well, we certainly did wander, and one must confess that there was some degree of tattling, in the sense of chatter, gossip, and banter, in between periods of dedicated birding. Our twelve-hour trek took us from Glen Park Canyon in San Francisco, then meandering along the coast of San Mateo County from Princeton Harbor to Pilar Point, southward to Pescadero Marsh and tidepools, which required a return visit since the area was fog-bound, and onward to Año Nuevo, where we did not look at the elephant seals, but we did spot our only yellowthroat and Rufous Hummingbird. From there, we walked along Gazos Creek Road, where a good deal of our identification was done by birdsong, thanks to Julie's expertise.

Back at the tidepools at Pescadero, we almost despaired of seeing any birds because of the fog's obscurity, but in the mist, through the haze and the blur, Penny nabbed them, the birds for which we are named, Wandering Tattlers. Outstanding, Penny! Especially insofar as she had to endure some resistance from the group, which mistakenly identified the birds as either Surfbirds or Willets. That's how foggy it was.

So, what is the deal with these tattlers, you ask. Aside from the humor in their name, so-called because of their vociferous call of a rapid series of clear whistles, the birds appeal because of their subtlety. Unlike flashier species, say the Black Turnstone, the tattler is a fairly boring looking bird, a uniform gray above, with a dark eye line, a white eyebrow flecked with gray. Its bill is dark, legs a dull yellow. On spotting this solitary drab bird through your binoculars, at first you pay them little mind. You barely care. But as the bird teeters and bobs continuously while feeding, you find yourself drawn to its



ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

eccentric busy-body personality, and you feel the excitement of identifying the bird more from its singular behavior.

It's as though, by utilizing the process of elimination, you comprehend the bird more from what it *is not* than what it *is*. If such an existential approach to birding, with its dab of anthropomorphism, leaves you confused and even cold, well, you'll just have to take our word for it. We like the bird. We find it endearing. We were quite excited to locate it, as the waves came crashing against the rocks, on the fog-shrouded shores of the Pacific. Its presence validated our efforts in identifying as many species as we could in this fund-raising event. We are The Wandering Tattlers! Behold!

As the major reproductive season for birds, spring always offers the opportunity for birders to witness the entire cycle: the mating, the displays of breeding plumage, the singing, the drawing up of territorial lines, the nest-building, the fledging, etc. Even the hardest heart cannot resist the beauty inherent in this process and the hope that it instills.

With that sentiment expressed, we return to the troops in the field. The Wandering Tattlers had their most moving experience with the aforementioned at the baylands area in Menlo Park. We were first struck by the freakish sight of a six-legged American Avocet. Gasp! We then perceived this wierd phenomenon miraculously transform itself into a parent bird with two babies emerging from its protective bosom, chicks so tiny that their wings were the size of fava beans. While our heart strings were plucked, a chorus of ooh's and ah's filled the air.

In no time, the place was swarming with baby American avocets, all protected by parents that swooped down, with aggressive noises, upon any bird

or human who got too close. All was well in this microcosm until we spotted three tiny babies all alone, struggling to swim what seemed an ocean of a distance, with wavelets that threatened to swamp them. The three babies were lost! What could have happened? More to the point, our sympathy for their plight demanded that we do something. But no! This was Nature at work, operating according to Her own hard, cruel laws: survival of the fittest and whatnot. Such a dilemma! Fortunately, our torn sensibilities found relief when from out of nowhere the parents appeared to escort Huey, Louie, and Dewey to the distant shore, out of harm's way.

Then, what to make of the following vignette? Avocet parents were rushing at Killdeer parents, the latter adopting the broken wing ruse to distract what seemed like a threat to their offspring. Here were two bird species, each perfectly harmless to the other, neither one a predator, having a stand-off. Both were behaving instinctively but at cross-purposes. Take it easy, guys! Save your energy for a real danger, when one of those egrets or night-herons lurking in the underbrush tries to gobble up your baby avocet as a tasty hors d'oeuvre.

The Case of the Yellow-faced Mockingbird

Your four trusty birders, Rosilyn, Penny, Julie and Tom had set out innocently enough the morning of April 25 to identify as many bird species as they could in the year's Birdathon. While they met with success, nabbing 121 species (10 more than last year), they found themselves stumped, nay baffled, near the end of their twelve-hour day out in the field. After a full, rich birding experience, one fraught with emotion, your intrepid birders came up against a bird at Palo Alto Baylands that they could never quite account for: the yellow-faced mockingbird.

Mockingbirds do not have yellow faces.

The mockingbird, which, by the way happens to be Tom's favorite bird, is a sleek, trim bird that sings its heart out as it flicks its long tail and beats its strikingly patterned wing, but the bird is virtually monochromatic, mostly grey with black and white markings. Imagine their consternation when the team spotted what could only be a mockingbird, because of its size and behavior, but with a lemony-yellow visage.

"Am I starting to see things?" asked Tom incredulously, "Granted it has been a long day, and my eyes are shot to hell, but even so what is that bird doing with a yellow face?"

"Could it be a kingbird?" Julie ventured a guess, a long-shot, dubious at best.

"Not in this habitat," Rosilyn clarified the matter once and for all, "besides, it's not yellow enough. It *has* to be a mockingbird."

"Well, *I* haven't heard it sing one note," Penny retorted truculantly, thereby proving that yes, indeed, it has been a long day.

At this point, the bird cooperated with a loud, buzzing rattle.

"A female oriole?" Julie suggested feebly.

"No, no, no. I've got it! It's one of those exotic tropical mockingbirds from The Bahamas or Mexico. I can't wait to call Joe Morlan to get it on the rare bird alert. Then, I'll get credit for it in *The Gull*," Tom boasted.

"Get off it," Rosilyn scoffed, "Those forms are browner with a lot of streaks on their flanks. In any event," she added, her voice laden with mock scorn, "we're not doing this birdathon to have our egos stroked. So just forget about Joe Morlan, would you?"

"Yeah, Tom," Penny reminded him, "You'll only come to grief at his hands anyway. Or have you forgotten the in-

cident with the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker?"

Rosilyn asserted authoritatively, "I bet that bird has a yellow face from something in its diet. I mean, there's all this wild mustard growing around here."

"On the other hand," Julie wondered, "it could have eaten some weird chemical here at the sewage treatment plant. After all, we're not that far from Silicon Valley."

"Oh no!" Penny groaned, "I can't stand another gloom and doom report about pollution. Not today. I thought we were going to have fun. No environmental issues, pulleeze, you guys."

"Well, what are we doing this birdathon for anyway, if not for an environmental issue, to save Mono Lake?" Rosilyn interjected, her face glowing with an expression of dedicated idealism, or was it from her sunburn?

"Why couldn't it be a mutant, then?" Tom offered.

"No! Boo! Are you kidding me?"

"Stop squabbling, you guys," Julie urged them, its' been a tough day. I suggest we wrap this up and head for a restaurant. I could stand a beer myself."

"A margarita!" Penny put in her order.

The rest is up to you.

—TOM WHITE

BACK ISSUES OF *The GULL*

For those of you who have a priceless collection of back issues of *The Gull*, but need a few copies to fill in the blank spots, Susan Watson has copies dating from 1974. Call her at 510-254-4077 if you would like to complete your collection. She is willing to let them go!



DEMENTIA IN MOCKINGBIRDS

Spring is surely a strange time of year for some of God's critters!! In our neighborhood there are all sorts of wonderful little creatures. Raccoons, possums, deer, children, a myriad of winged wonders and two absolutely demented mockingbirds.

The one mockingbird lives in a tree across the street. I watch her in the morning while I sip my tea and pursue the morning's bad news. She is fine as long as there isn't a breath of air to move a leaf on "her" tree.

About 7:00 a.m. the people in the house next to her tree leave for work. First the gentleman of the home leaves. He opens his door, just a crack, and peers out. All is quiet. He steps out on the porch and walks quickly down the front steps. And that bird zooms out of her tree like a fighter jet and nails the guy on top of his already balding head. The bird dives, squawks and screeches until the poor fellow is in his car and gone. The mockingbird disappears. And lays in wait for the lady of the house to rush madly out, late as usual, only to have to run the gamut of this mad bird. The bird has a different tactic with women, she flies in their faces, and squawks, and screeches. Then, flies off to her tree to, presumably, sit on some eggs for awhile.

Along comes the neighborhood cat. Apparently this old black and white cat has a severe memory problem. *Every* morning the bird flies down and chases him half way down the street. The cat shakes himself off, dignity in tatters, and slinks under a friendly porch.

Then along comes the second demented mockingbird. I have no idea what her problem is. If she has eggs they are not nearby because I see her come over the rooftops to attack the resident bird. Their aerial fights rival

any fight done in the most sophisticated aircraft ever built. They dive and soar and carry on for five minutes at a time. Then off to their duties at the nests. Everything returns to peace and quiet for awhile.

All of a sudden, Mama bird bursts out of that tree and straight up in the air to berate a passing crow. The crow has excellent evasive tactics and manages to escape intact. Back to the nest. And out yet again to "talk" to a side mirror on a car across the street that the sun's rays hit just right and made her mad again. While she is there, she sees her reflection in the mirror and that really sets her off. She spends the next hour flying back and forth from the tree to that "other" bird.

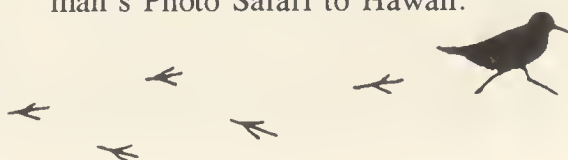
There is an errant breeze that gently blows a scrap of paper along the curb. Bam! Out of her tree and after that paper, hollering as if the world is ending. two or three minutes later, the paper is "dead" and Mama bird goes back to her nest.

I wonder if those eggs are going to survive? And will the babies have mental problems because they are deserted so often? And what about the mental health of that poor Mama bird? Will she make it to motherhood? I'll let you know.

—GERALDINE J. ARKO

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHERS

The Bay Area Bird Photographers, who meet monthly at the Palo Alto Baylands Interpretive Center on East Embarcadero Rd., will not be meeting in July or August. Their September date is a change from an earlier announcement: **Wednesday, Sept. 9, 7:30-9:30 p.m.** That program will feature native forest birds of Hawaii, presented by members who went with the Cheeseman's Photo Safari to Hawaii.



NEWS FROM OUR RANCH

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THE BOLINAS LAGOON PRESERVE SEASON

Another great season has ended at our Bolinas Lagoon Preserve. The herons and egrets are fledging, the Ranch ends its public season in mid July, and the last groups of school children count the Ranch as a fond school memory.

Our most important visitors of course were the herons and egrets. Nine Great Blue Herons nested with us this year. There were 94 Great Egret nests and just a single Snowy Egret nest. The parking lot was visited each night of the season by a gray fox and a bobcat, each of which left its mark in what seemed an unending and messy dispute for territory. Red-winged Blackbirds, Cliff Swallows and Band-tailed Pigeons were among our more obvious visitors to the area around the Ranch yard. The blackbirds and pigeons will probably stay throughout the year, but the Cliff Swallows will join millions of other swallows in Mexico, Central and South America.

On the people side our visitors included 3,829 students from 131 classes. Of these, 60 classes were granted transportation scholarships so they could afford to get to the Ranch. Those scholarships are thanks to the generosity of Bank of America Corporation. It is through the generosity of our devoted volunteer docents that our education program for fourth and fifth graders is so very effective. As this column goes to press we just don't know how many people visited the Ranch, but from casual observation we think we had more

visitors than during the last couple of years. Remember it is only through the generosity of our friends, volunteers and donors that the Ranch exists in the first place, so give yourself a pat on the back.

Visitors aren't the only story at the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve. Research is ongoing. Our native grasslands restoration project continues at two sites. One is on Mouse Hill between Volunteer and Schwartz Canyons. A second plot is in Garden Club Canyon. Both are successful and we plan to extend them in the future. Ticks and lime disease are continuing concerns. Volunteer researcher Tony Paz and ranch biologist Ray Peterson have prepared educational materials about our local ticks. They have also studied our tick population and their research has lead them to a possible relationship between woodrats and the lime disease spirochete. In fact they are wondering if woodrats are reservoirs for that spirochete. Their research during the coming year may provide some answers.

TRICOLORED BLACKBIRDS RETURN!

The Livermore Marsh at our Cypress Grove Preserve once again has been chosen by a flock of Tricolored Blackbirds as a nesting site. Ranch biologist John Kelly noted their return on May 27. Not only did they return, but they began nest building the same day. It has been two years since they last nested at Livermore Marsh. John wonders if wind affects feeding habits and is the reason they abandoned the Cypress Grove nesting site. He plans to try to learn if that is the case.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: TOMALES BAY SHOREBIRD COUNTS

Once again we are looking for beginning and experienced birders to help us monitor shorebird populations at Tomales Bay. Our coastal estuaries are

critical to the remarkable variety of migrating clouds of plovers and sandpipers. Plan to spend a late summer or fall day helping us census those wonderful migrants. August marks the beginning of our count period and we hope you will join us in continuing this important research project. Call John Kelly at Cypress Grove Preserve for information (415) 663-8203.

STILL OTHER CHANCES TO GET INVOLVED

"Natural History for Teachers" at Bolinas, Cypress Grove and Bouverie Sanctuaries during the week of July 20-24 with John Kelly, John Petersen and Ray Peterson (\$175). If you teach elementary science and need 3 semester units don't miss it. At last report there were still a few openings for this excellent program. Not only will you get a few extra units, you are sure to meet

other dedicated teachers and get to see all three ACR preserves. Do call Edris at (415) 868-9244 to register.

BOLINAS LAGOON PRESERVE DOCENT TRAINING CLASS

The Volunteer Council is seeking a few dedicated new docents. Are you one who wants to share a knowledge of nature with 4th and 5th graders who visit the Ranch each fall and spring? Are you one who wants to increase your own knowledge of nature? Are you one who wishes to join with others who share your excitement for learning, for nature, and for the Ranch? Then perhaps you are one who should join our September docent training class. You missed our first orientation day, but a second one is scheduled for August 26. If you are interested please call us at (415) 868-9244.

—DAN MURPHY

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